Not Okay

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Not Okay

by WordsAblaze

Summary

His muscles are frozen solid and the canopy above is on the verge of swallowing him whole and the grass below is tightening its grip on him and he can't move and he can't breathe and he can't think and—

"Oh, Will…"

—he gasps, flinching as warmth cups his face, as a burning hand brushes his hair out of his eyes, as blistering fingers trace each feature of his face back into existence.

"Shh, shh, it's alright."

Notes

encephalitis returns, almost nonsensically this time ?

day 30 prompts used: bridal carry

See the end of the work for more notes

Will is cold. So, so cold.

He shouldn't be, because he'd just closed his eyes and the fireplace had still been going so, if anything, he should be too warm. But he's not, and that makes no sense.

The sky makes no sense, either. The clouds are darkening in turn, and slowly oozing down towards the ground. Branches interlock above his head, blocking out what little light the moon has to offer, and he can tell each of the trees involved has a vendetta against him.

He glances down at his feet, watching in morbid fascination as the grass reaches upwards, dragging him down, deep into the muddy surface below. He stumbles backwards when his knees threaten to buckle, and finds himself staring up at the canopy.

Blinking slowly, he reaches an arm upwards, watching as his fingers blur into one another, something dark dripping from each nail. His other arm refuses to move, and he can't understand why, but he can't move his head to check whether it's still there. It must be, because someone is holding his hand, their claws digging into his fingers, and they can't be holding it if it isn't there.

It doesn't hurt, which is odd.

But he figures that's the cold burying the world under a thin veneer of ice. He can feel it on his face, in his eyes, and every blink is exhausting.

Water rushes below him, and vertigo swoops through his stomach. He manages to cough himself upright before he retches, groaning as something thick and warm spills from his lips, something sharp and metallic, something that tastes like sin and sorrow. There's too little moonlight to identify it, but it's ice in his throat, and he can feel his teeth chattering once his head sinks into the earth again.

A fox howls somewhere from across the stream, and Will realises he's standing at the edge of a stream. There are dismembered arms and legs floating just below the surface, all of them glowing and pulsing and throbbing in tandem with the ache behind his skull. He catches sight of an eyeball, and nausea riles in his gut, sending him doubling over.

His feet fall through the next rock they aim for, and water fills his mouth. Eyes wide, he splutters, pushing against the waves and limbs until his lungs are no longer screaming. He gasps, and he's propped up against what must be a tree, bark digging uncomfortably into his back. The back morphs into spikes that dig further under his skin, and he cries out, straining to escape the pain.

He can't, and ends up staring at the canopy for a second time.

It's alive this time, sneering at him, baring its fangs at him, curling its crooked hands down towards him. He closes his eyes, hoping that it'll just stop and go away and leave him alone if he doesn't pay it any attention, but the moon sparks and fizzles and hisses its disapproval of his cowardice.

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"Oh, Will…"

—he gasps, flinching as warmth cups his face, as a burning hand brushes his hair out of his eyes, as blistering fingers trace each feature of his face back into existence.

"Shh, shh, it's alright."

It's not, but he doesn't have enough of a tongue to say so.

"Can you open your eyes for me, Will?"

It turns out he can, and he blinks in confusion when he does, because he's staring at the sun, but there's only supposed to be one sun in the solar system. He blinks again, and again, and the twin suns fade until he can see the concern in them, in the pair of eyes looming above him.

"No—" he manages, because he's not strong enough to fight the Wendigo.

"Your name is Will Graham. It is currently twelve past three in the morning. You are in Baltimore, Maryland."

He blinks, and the eyes blink back, now a more recognisable shade of burning brown.

"My name is Hannibal Lecter. It is currently fourteen past three in the morning. We are in Baltimore, Maryland."

The canopy recedes, and the moon casts its angry gaze on the two of them, on Hannibal knelt beside him as if in prayer. It's uncertain what he could be praying to, though, and Will can't remember how questions work, so he doesn't even try to ask.

"Do you think you can stand, Will?" Hannibal either whispers or screams.

Will shakes his head, and hears his body whimper as arms settle under his shoulders and behind his knees, the ground trembling beneath him as he's peeled away from it, cradled instead to someone's chest. Hannibal's heartbeat is a flame, and the ice that is Will melts as he is carried through the sky, the trees sinking into the horizon in defeat.

"You can rest, Will. I have you," Hannibal either screams or whispers.

The fox is howling again, but it seems distant this time, as if threatened by the presence of another. Will turns his head away from its cry and buries his face in the crook of Hannibal's neck, not entirely sure why but sure enough not to resist the urge.

"Hann—"

One, extended beat of silence.

“I’m here, Will. I promise you are safe now.”

He doesn’t feel safe with the Wendigo nearby, but he also feels safer than he remembers ever feeling with strong, steady arms keeping him afloat even as the water laps at his ankles.

“C—cold,” he mumbles, or perhaps he doesn’t.

Claws tighten around him, but his skin remains unbroken, warmth flooding his veins as he’s pulled closer to that inferno spilling from behind Hannibal’s ribs. “I know, Will. You will be warm again soon, I assure you.”

Will hums, because it sounds unrealistic, when his bones have long since become glacial. He won’t argue, though, because any promises of warmth, no matter how false they may seem, are much more appealing than the cold, piercing gaze of the moon.

Another wave collides with his dangling arm, and he shivers. Hannibal pauses for half a moment before the two of them begin gliding through the trees much faster than before, almost impossibly so. He wonders, briefly, if Hannibal has struck a bargain with the Wendigo, and the thought has almost made it past his teeth when the world spins and he finds himself upright.

“Hannibal?”

And he’s there, his hands on either side of Will’s neck. He smiles down at Will, a quiet version of the sun back inside his eyes, and is then suddenly to one side of him rather than above him, careful fingers directing Will’s blurred gaze towards himself. “I’m still here, Will. It’s okay.”

It’s not okay, there’s no way it can be okay when the fox has begun howling again, but, with the warmth that is Hannibal beside him, Will thinks it might eventually be.

End Notes

if it helps, even I'M not entirely sure what's going on today ;-;

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